Partner Presentation Form

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Picture of the contact person

Type of organisation:

SME ☐   School ☐   University **x**   Public Authority ☐
Training ☐   No Profit ☐   NGO ☐

Other (Specify)

Fields of action:

SMEs ☐   Youth **x**   Universities **x**   Public Authorities ☐
Equal opportunities **x**   Schools **x**   Unemployed ☐

Other (Specify)

Description of the organisation
The University of Florence has adhered to the principles of the European Charter and Code for Researchers and, since December 2018, it is one of the 16 Italian universities that have been granted the HRS4R Human Resources Strategy For Researchers Award (https://www.unifi.it/vp-10899-hrs4r-excellence-in-research.html?newlang=eng). Moreover, the University of Florence is a partner of the Erasmus Plus European Universities alliance EUNIWELL European University for Well-Being https://www.euniwell.eu/.
Recently, the University of Florence has been ranked among top Italian Universities for the distribution of national research funds, and it is one of the most active Italian universities in terms of European projects and related grants. In Horizon 2020 the EU funded 147 projects for a total of about 54 million Euros, in Horizon Europe a total of 38 projects of about 22 million Euros. As of December 2022, the University of Florence has 25 ongoing Erasmus+ projects, 9 ongoing LIFE projects and 14 ongoing projects that have been funded under other EU Direct Grants (Creative Europe, DG Justice, COST Actions, etc). The University also participates in several joint initiatives and research programmes sponsored by international agencies, associations, foundations and other donors.
The Department of Education, Languages, Interculture, Literatures and Psychology (FORLILPSI) at UniFi is made up of about 50 scholars, including full and associate professors, assistant professors and researchers. In terms of research and knowledge production, particular interest is placed on individual, relational, social and environmental wellbeing; on building social, health and educational services based on cultural, legal and scientific evidence, and the emerging needs of civil society; on developing innovative approaches to teaching and learning with a particular focus on the use of digital media and the promotion of media and digital literacy; on supporting research and training in intercultural contexts to promote equity, social inclusion and democratic citizenship.
The project activities will be carried out by the Educational Technology Laboratory (LTE) at the Department of Education, Languages, Intercultural Studies, Literature, and Psychology (FORLILPSI) of University of Florence which has a long track record in the field of digital technologies applied to education.

Experience of the organization in previous European projects
The UniFi team have been involved in several projects/initiatives related to TED SOEP project in the field of STEM education. The first one to be mentioned is a national project, T-PLACE, funded by the National Research Plan 2021-2027 and currently underway at the University of Florence, aims to design and develop an inclusive model of place-based education, leveraging the use of tools cross-media, such as extended reality and immersive technologies, to promote a participatory approach to places (landscape, material and immaterial cultural heritage) with the aim of generating a positive impact on citizenship and society as a whole. T-PLACE involves municipalities and local institutions, both public and private, to establish training, documentation and exploration activities that actively involve citizens.
Another project involving the UniFi team strictly link with the TED SOEP is RETURN (Multi-risk science for resilient communities under a changing climate), aiming at strengthening research on environmental, natural, and anthropogenic risks at national level and promote their participation in European and global strategic value chains. The project aims to improve understanding of environmental risks, both of natural origin and linked to human activity, in relation to the effects of climate change. In particular, the UniFi team is responsible of the design of innovative tools and strategies for risk education, based on the use of Extended Reality and immersive digital environments and of its validation and evaluation.

Experience and Expertise of the organization in the project's subject area
The LTE of the University of Florence is a center of excellence in the field of digital technologies applied to education. Founded in the 1980s, the LTE has evolved over time, adapting to the new challenges and opportunities offered by technological innovation, with a particular focus on Artificial Intelligence (AI), digital learning and emerging skills in the education sector. This report analyzes the skills of the LTE, with particular attention to the integration of AI in training processes and the innovative initiatives promoted by the laboratory.

Contributions that can be provided to the project
UniFi oversees the design of an online and onsite course for STEM teachers in the context of higher education. In particular, UniFi is the leader of the WP 2 – Training Package for Capacity Building, aiming at planning, designing and implementing a training package on how to integrate OERs and self-directed OEPs into STEM teacher education programmes. The course will be articulated in 5 modules, each of them with online and onsite activities (Module 1 – Introduction to Open Educational Resources (OERs) and Practices; Module 2 – Inquiry-Based Learning in STEM education; Module 3 – Problem-Based Learning in STEM education; Module 4 – Simulating Real-World Scenarios in STEM Teaching; Module 5 – Engaging Students with Game-Based Learning in STEM).

Reasons of involvement in the project

The University of Florence, through its various departments and faculties, is well-positioned to contribute significantly to the thematic areas of this Project. UNIFI activities and experiences align closely with the thematic area of Digital Transformation and related applications in the field of education with different foci, including STEM.

UniFI has initiated numerous programs designed to boost the digital skills of the educators, enabling them to integrate technology effectively into their teaching. In terms of mainstreaming digitalization, UniFi has worked on integrating digital tools and platforms into its educational processes. UniFI experience extends to a wide range of digital skills programmes, catering to diverse learners' needs. These programmes are tailored to meet the evolving demands of the students and the broader educational community, equipping them with proficiency in the latest digital technologies and methods, applied to the field of STEM, including Artificial Intelligence, and other educational fields. Moreover, UniFi's involvement in collaborative projects and research in digital education has significantly bolstered its expertise in the field.

By leveraging these strengths, the University of Florence is poised to significantly support the project's goals and contribute to its overall success, drawing on our extensive expertise and experience in the topic of digital transformation in STEM education.

Contact Person's Experience and Expertise

Prof. Maria Ranieri: Full Professor of Educational Methods and Technology, and director of the Educational Technology Lab at UniFi. Her main research areas include theory and methodology relating to media and technology in education, with a particular focus on digital literacy education, teacher professional development, social network for teaching and learning. Maria is also vice-president of the Italian Association of Media Education, and co-editor of the Journal of Media Literacy Education (USA) and Computers & Education. She coordinated several European projects, including SuperRED (Supporting Self-Regulated Learning in Digital and Remote Education) (2021-23) and she was also the responsible for UniFi team in the ICME - Inclusive and Creative Media Education project and also in ACADIMIA (European Teachers' Academy for Creative and Inclusive Learning).